



NO. 54 1920H 04

# Great Sanskrit Plays



3 Illustrated Classics from India  
Ratnavali • Udayana • Vasantasena



## Illustrated Classics From India

### Ratnavali A Sanskrit Play

The story Ratnavali is attributed to Emperor Harsha, who ruled from Kanauj in the 7th century AD. Princess Ratnavali of Simhala is shipwrecked en route to Kaushambi where she was going in order to marry King Udayana, her betrothed. The king's wise minister, Yaugandhiyayana, recognises her, but to bide for time he enlists her to Queen Vasavadatta, her own cousin, as a maid named Sogenika.

King Harsha was a great patron of art and literature. Renowned Sanskrit poets like Banu Bhatta were in his court. Harsha himself was a poet and playwright. He wrote three Sanskrit plays: Nagananda, Priyadarshika and Ratnavali.

Harsha obtained material for these plays from Gunadhya's Brihatkatha, which was a treasure house of stories. Ratnavali and Priyadarshika have similar plots. Udayana, the legendary king of Kaushambi, is the hero in both plays. Stories of King Udayana and Queen Vasavadatta were well-known in the world of ancient Indian literature. Harsha was adept at contriving dramatic situations and intrigue. This earned him the title *Nipuna Kavi* or the skillful poet.

Script: Subba Rao Illustrations: Pratap Mulick

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# RATNAVALI



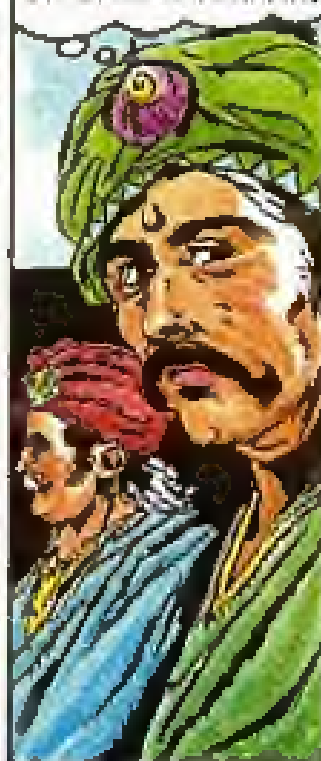
PRINCESS RATNAVALI, THE DAUGHTER OF VIKRAMABAHU, KING OF SIMHALA, WAS GOING TO KAUSHAMBI TO MARRY KING UDAYANA.

VASUBHUTI, THE KING'S MINISTER, WHO WAS ESCORTING RATNAVALI, TURNED TO BABHRAVA, THE ENVOY FROM KAUSHAMBI.

OUR KING WAS SAD TO HEAR THAT HIS NIECE, KING UDAYANA'S QUEEN, VASAVADATTA, DIED IN THE FIRE AT LAVANAKA.



SO KING VIKRAMABAHU BELIEVES THE RUMOUR SPREAD BY THE MINISTER YAGANDHARAYANA!



TO KEEP THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO FAMILIES ALIVE, HE HAS AGREED TO SEND OUR PRINCESS TO KAUSHAMBI.



HOW WILL HE REACT WHEN HE DISCOVERS THAT VASAVADATTA IS VERY MUCH ALIVE?

YOUNG RATNAVALI WAS THINKING ABOUT VASAVADATTA AND KING UDMYANA.

MY COUSIN, WHOM I HAVE NEVER MET, IS DEAD. THE KING LOVED HER DEEPLY. WILL I BE ABLE TO WIN HIS HEART?

SUDDENLY —

WHAT'S HAPPENING? THE SHIP HAS STARTED TO ROLL!

A SUDDEN STORM HAD BEGUN. THE HUGE WAVES TOSSED THE SHIP ABOUT...

HELP!

...AND IT BROKE INTO A THOUSAND PIECES.

OH GOD!



RATNAVALI MANAGED TO CLUTCH  
A PLANK...



... AND KEEP AFLOAT.



FORTUNATELY, SOON AFTER,  
SHE SPOTTED ANOTHER SHIP.



THE MASTER OF THE SHIP, A MERCHANT WHO  
WAS SAILING TO KAUSHAMBI, HEARD THE CRY.



HE ORDERED THE SHIP TO TURN  
AROUND TOWARDS HER...



... AND HELPED HER ABOARD.



WHO ARE YOU?



RATNAVALI REMAINED SILENT.

HOW CAN I TELL HIM THAT I AM THE PRINCESS OF SIMHALA? SEEING ME IN MY PRESENT STATE, WOULD HE BELIEVE ME?

WHY DOESN'T SHE ANSWER? IS SHE SUFFERING FROM A LOSS OF MEMORY?



ANYWAY FROM THE NECKLACE OF PRECIOUS STONES SHE IS WEARING, IT IS CLEAR THAT SHE IS A LADY OF NOBLE BIRTH.



MEANWHILE AT KAUSHAMBI, YAGANDHARAYANA, KING UDAYANA'S LOYAL MINISTER, WAS ANXIOUSLY PACING UP AND DOWN HIS CHAMBER.

PRINCESS RATNAVALI WILL SOON BE HERE. AND I HAVE NOT YET SPOKEN TO THE KING ABOUT HER.



HE LOVES VASAVADATTA TOO MUCH. HE WILL NOT AGREE TO MARRY ANOTHER WOMAN AND YET....



JUST THEN A GUARD ENTERED.

BRING HIM IN

SIR, A MERCHANT WANTS TO MEET YOU.



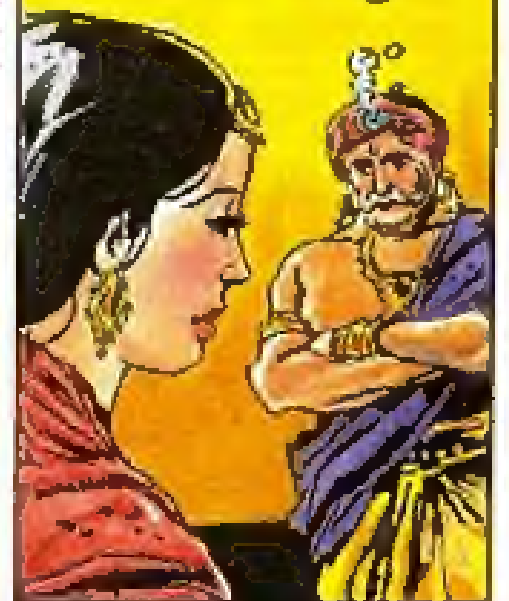
THE MERCHANT WALKED IN, BRINGING RATNAVALI WITH HIM.

SIR, I RESCUED THIS LADY FROM A SHIP-WRECK. I DON'T KNOW WHO SHE IS, BUT COULD I ENTRUST HER TO YOUR CARE?

THAT NECKLACE! SHE MUST BE RATNAVALI!



I WILL NOT LET HER SEE THAT I KNOW WHO SHE IS. I WILL TAKE HER TO THE QUEEN AND....







QUEEN VASAVADATTA LOOKED AFFECTIONATELY AT THE GIRL.



VASAVADATTA DID NOT KNOW THAT SAGARIKA WAS NONE OTHER THAN RATNAVALI, HER COUSIN.

AS YALIGANDHARAYANA LEFT —



VASAVADATTA TURNED TO SAGARIKA.





SAGARIKA WAS HAPPY AND ENJOYED HER LIGHT DUTIES.

THE QUEEN IS  
KIND AND  
GENTLE.



THEN CAME THE FESTIVAL OF  
MADANA, THE GOD OF LOVE.

SAGARIKA,  
TODAY THE  
QUEEN WILL  
WORSHIP  
MADANA IN  
THE GARDEN.

O SUSANGATA,  
I WOULD LOVE  
TO BE THERE,  
BUT I HAVE TO  
LOOK AFTER  
MEDHAVINI.

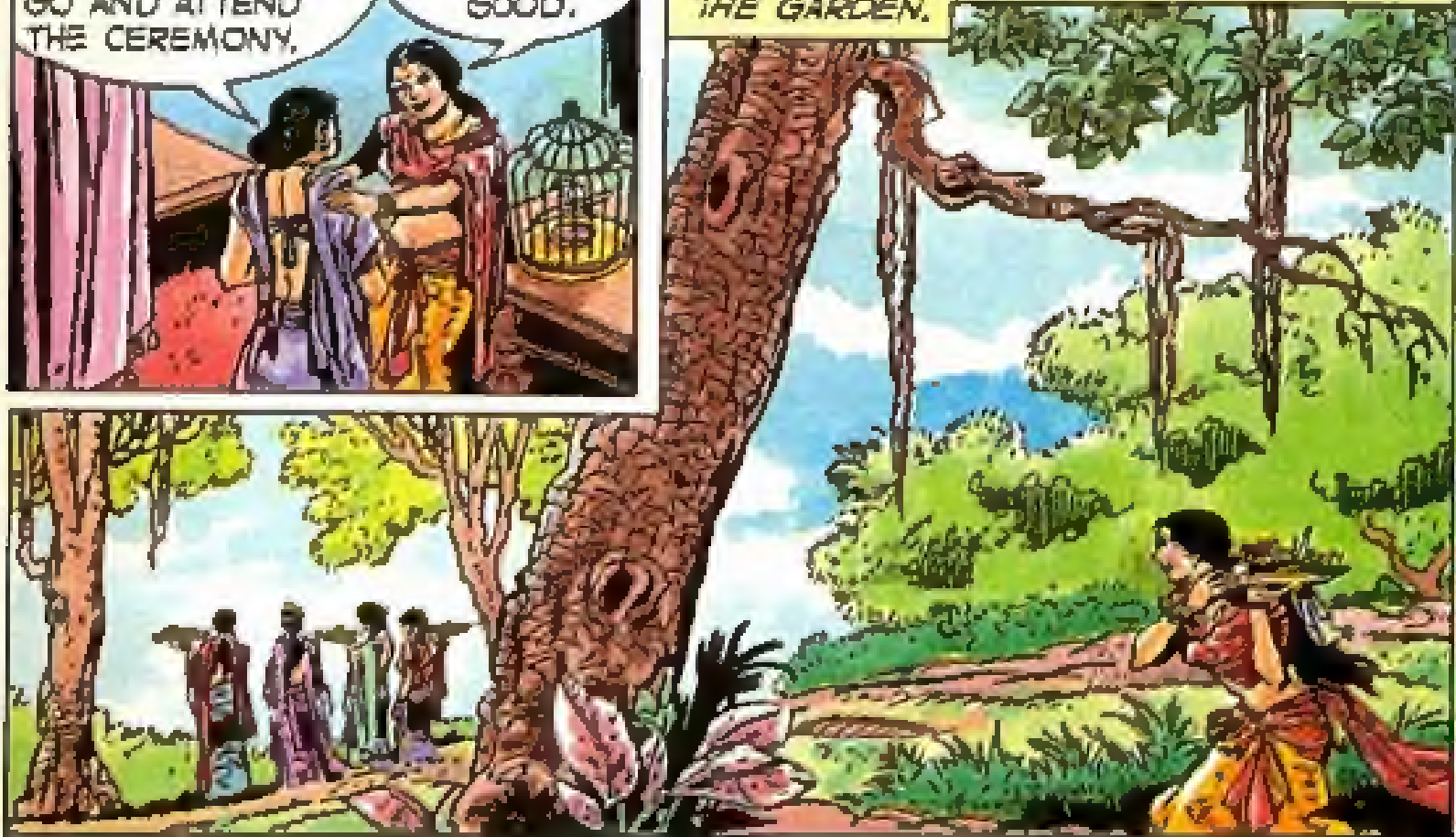


I WILL DO THAT  
FOR YOU, SAGARIKA.  
GO AND ATTEND  
THE CEREMONY.

SUSANGATA,  
YOU ARE SO  
GOOD.



SO CARRYING MATERIALS FOR WORSHIP,  
SAGARIKA FOLLOWED THE QUEEN INTO  
THE GARDEN.



MEANWHILE, PEOPLE WERE OUT IN THE STREETS, CELEBRATING THE FESTIVAL BY THROWING COLOURS AT ONE ANOTHER. FROM THE PALACE KING UDAYANA WATCHED THE MERRY-MAKING WITH VASANTAKA, THE COURT JESTER



JUST THEN TWO OF THE QUEEN'S MAIDS ENTERED.

VICTORY TO YOUR MAJESTY! THE QUEEN COMMANDS... NO, NO... THE QUEEN REQUESTS....

THE WORD 'COMMANDS' IS MORE APPROPRIATE ON MADANA'S FESTIVAL. TELL ME WHAT THE QUEEN COMMANDS.

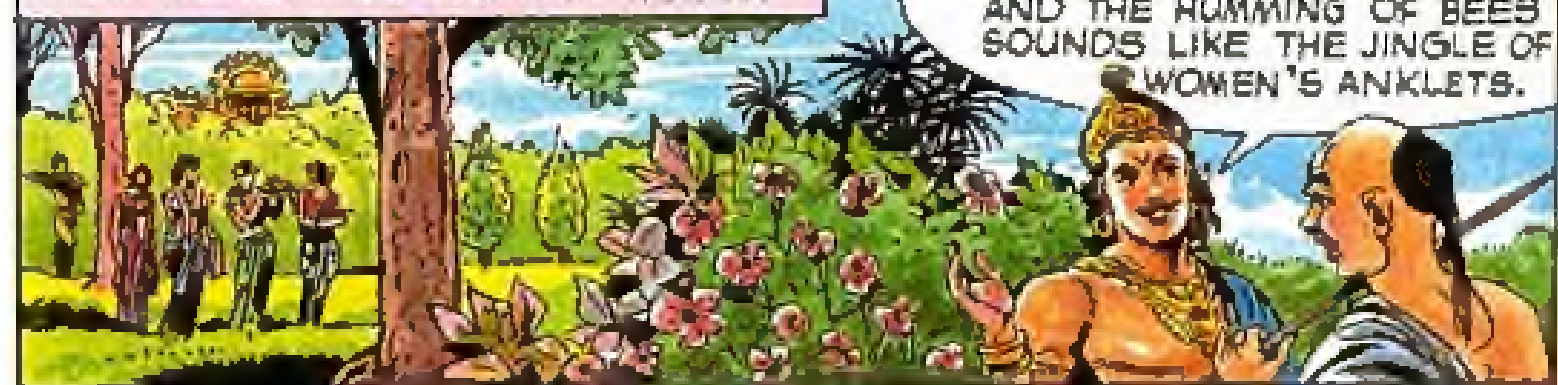


THE QUEEN REQUESTS YOUR PRESENCE AT MAKARANDA GARDEN WHERE SHE WILL BE WORSHIPPING THE GOD OF LOVE.

WE WILL COME AT ONCE.



WHEN THE KING REACHED THE GARDEN—

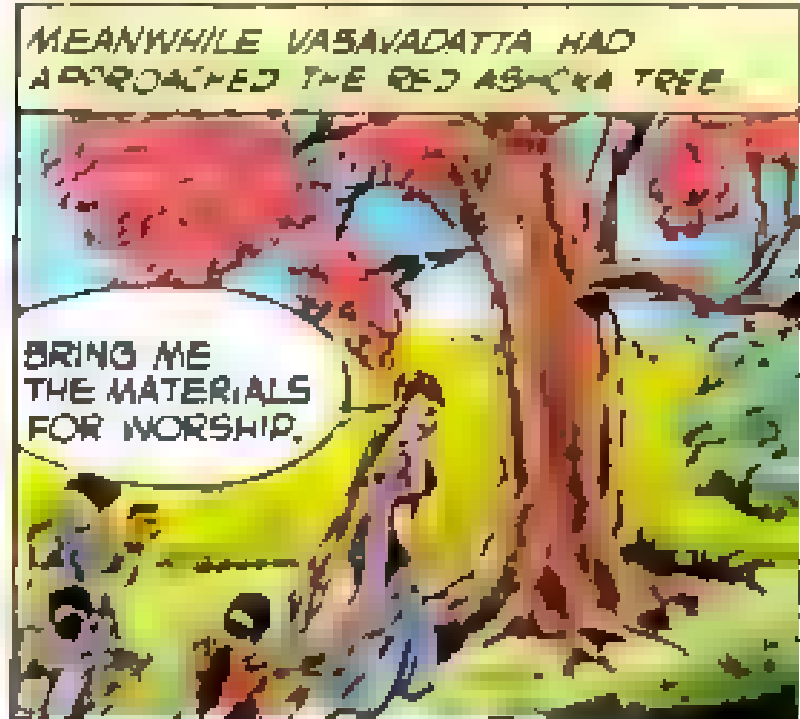


FRIEND, FLOWERS ARE IN BLOOM AND THE HUMMING OF BEES SOUNDS LIKE THE JINGLE OF WOMEN'S ANKLETS.



YOU ARE  
RIGHT,  
VASANTAKA.  
I SEE THEM  
COMING.

THAT SOUND IS NOT  
CAUSED BY BEES BUT BY  
THE ANKLETS OF THE  
QUEEN'S COMPANIONS!



BRING ME  
THE MATERIALS  
FOR WORSHIP.

MEANWHILE VASAVADATTA HAD  
APPROACHED THE RED ASHOKA TREE



SAGARIKA STEPPED FORWARD.

HERE THEY ARE,  
YOUR MAJESTY.

HOW DID  
SAGARIKA  
GET HERE?  
THE KING  
MUST NOT  
SEE HER!



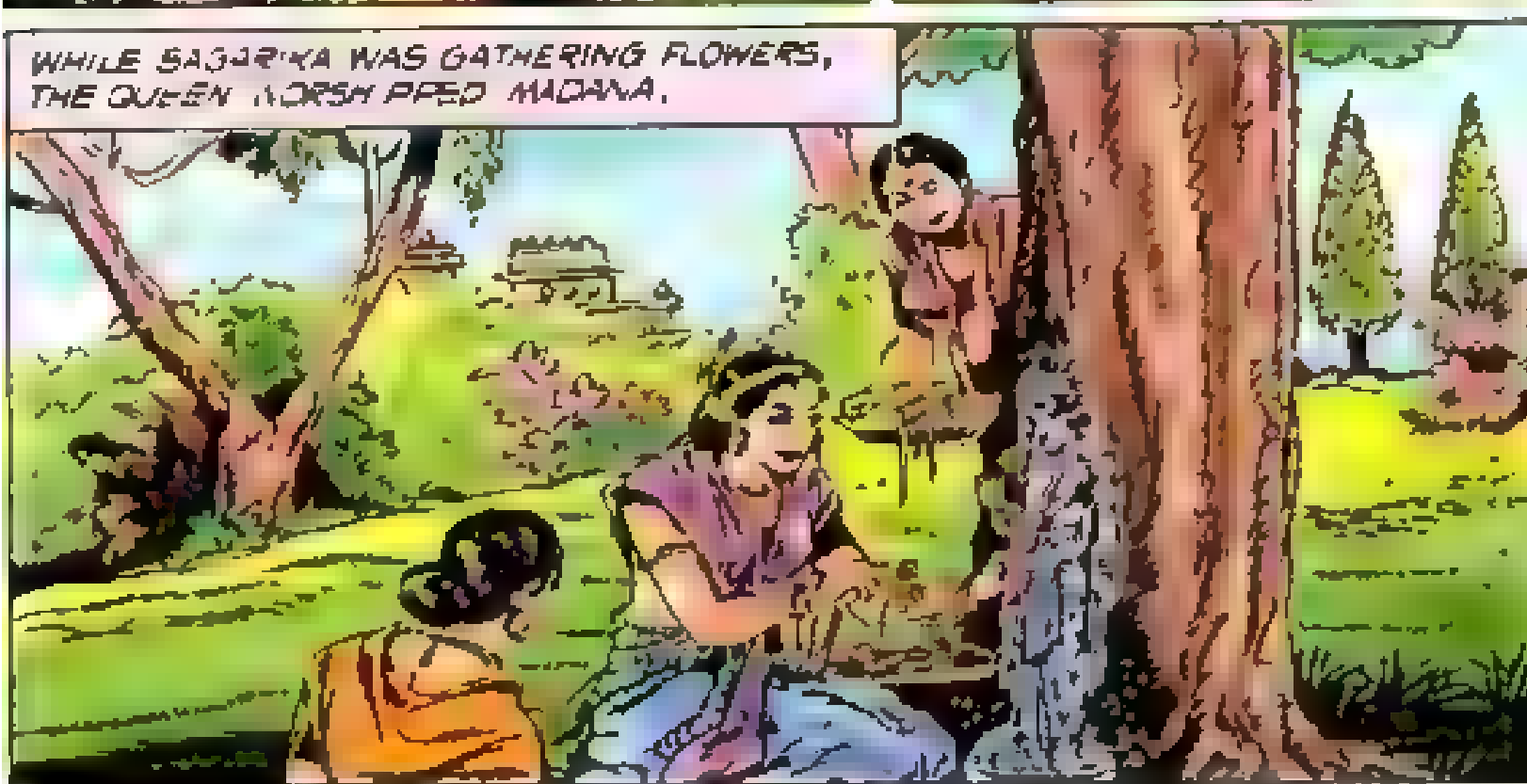
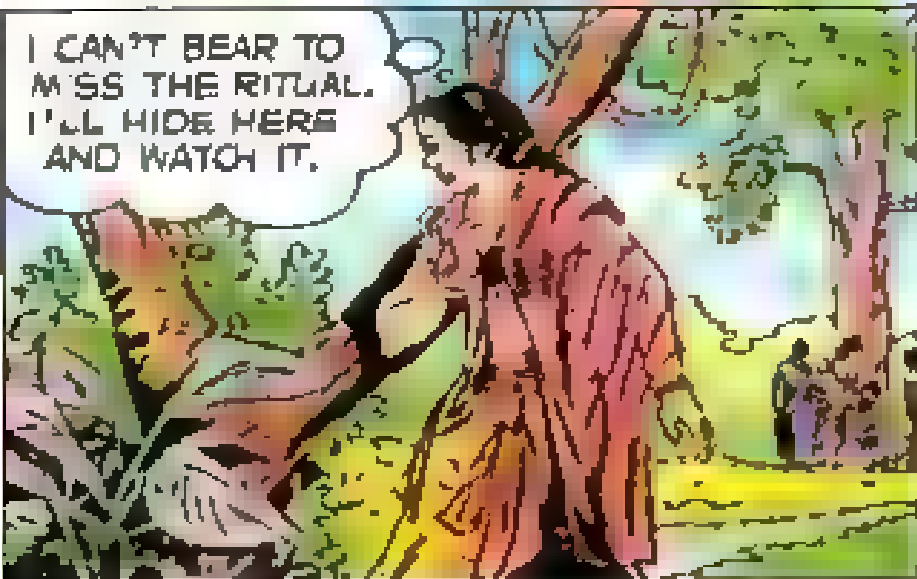
YES,  
YOUR  
MAJESTY

SAGARIKA, YOU  
SHOULD NOT HAVE  
LEFT MEETING IN  
G.I.E THAT TRAM TO  
KANCHANA NALA  
AND GO BACK




SAGARIKA LEFT RELUCTANTLY

SO I WON'T BE  
PRESENT  
AT THE KANCHANA  
S WORSHIP PERE



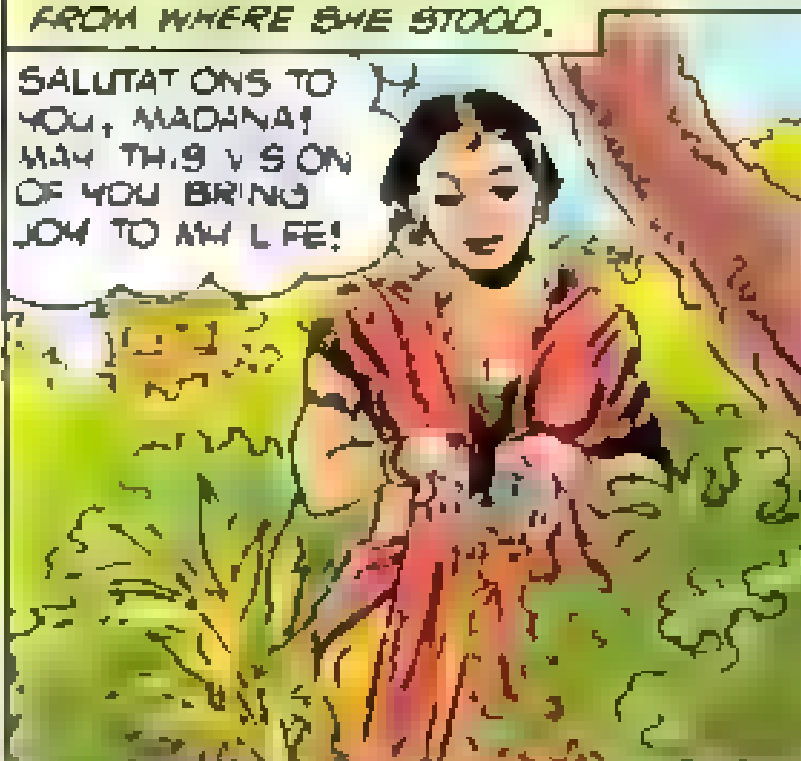


SUDDENLY SAGARIKA SAW THE KING —




OH! IN THIS COUNTRY MADANA COMES IN PERSON TO BE WORSHIPPED. IN ANOTHER COUNTRY WE HAVE ONLY HIS IMAGE TO WORSHIP!

THEN SAGARIKA OFFERED HER FLOWERS FROM WHERE SHE STOOD.



SALUTATIONS TO YOU, MADANA! MAY THIS VISION OF YOU BRING JOY TO MY LIFE!


THEN, AS SHE SET OUT FOR THE PALACE, SHE HEARD A GUARD CALLING OUT—



...MANY PRINCES ARE WAITING TO PAY THEIR RESPECTS TO KING UDAYANA...

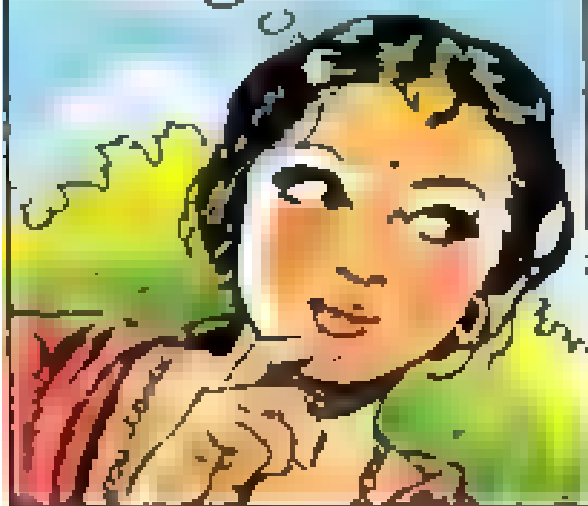
WHAT!

SAGARIKA TURNED BACK.



SO THAT WAS KING UDAYANA AND I AM BETROTHED TO HIM! THEN THE QUEEN MUST BE MY COUSIN, VASAVADATTA!

BUT IT CAN'T BE!  
VASAVADATTA DIED  
IN THE FIRE...



AS UDAYANA AND VASAVADATTA PASSED BY —



HOW  
HELPLESS  
I AM. I CAN'T  
EVEN LOOK  
UPON HIM, LET  
ALONE TALK  
TO HIM.

UDAYANA'S FACE HAUNTED SAGARIKA  
AND SHE HARDLY SLEPT THAT NIGHT.  
THE NEXT MORNING SHE WENT TO  
THE GARDEN HOUSE TAKING WITH HER  
A DRAWING BOARD, BRUSHES AND  
COLOURS.



I SAW HIM BUT  
FOR A MOMENT. YET  
MY HEART YEARNS  
FOR HIM.

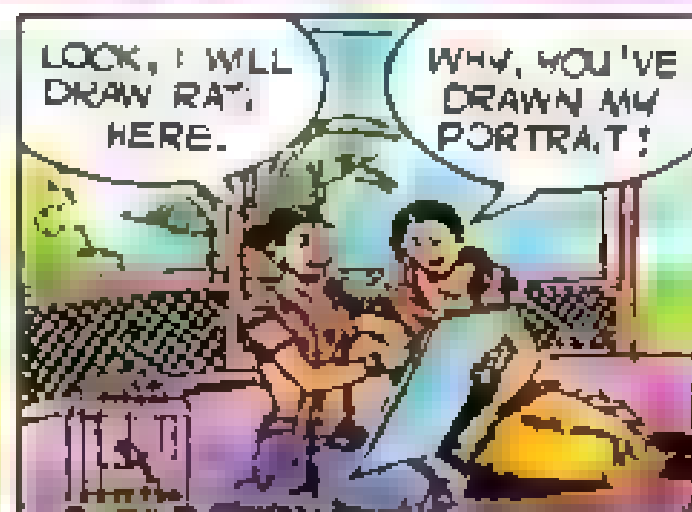
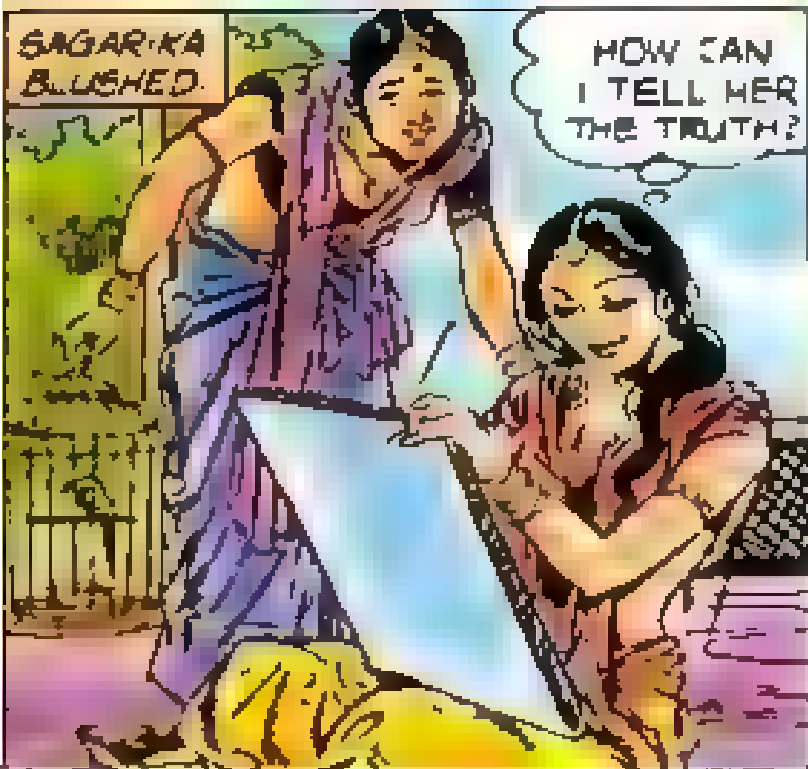
AS SHE SAT DOWN AND PAINTED A  
PICTURE OF KING UDAYANA FROM  
MEMORY

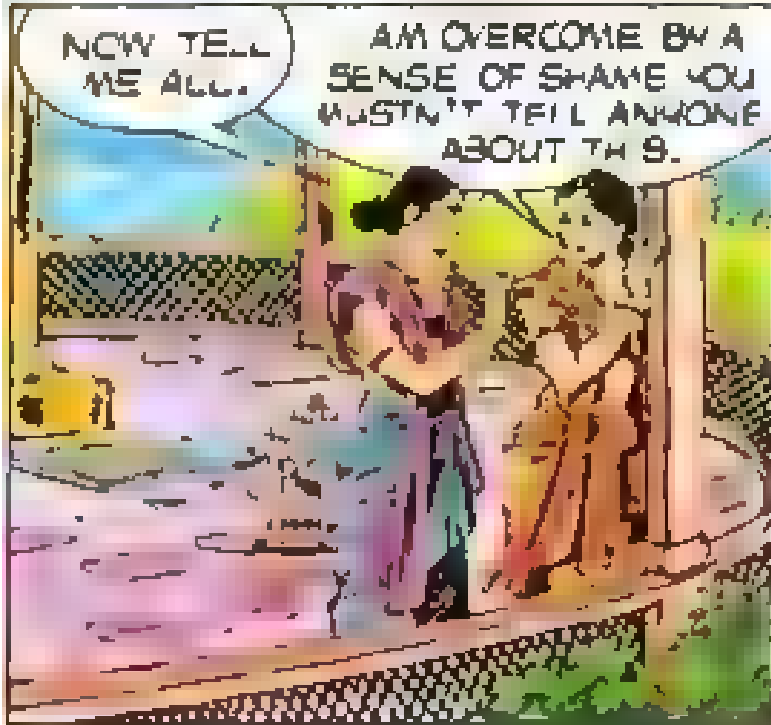


... SUSANGATA CREPT UP  
FROM BEHIND HER —



WHAT ARE YOU  
PAINTING,  
SAGARIKA?



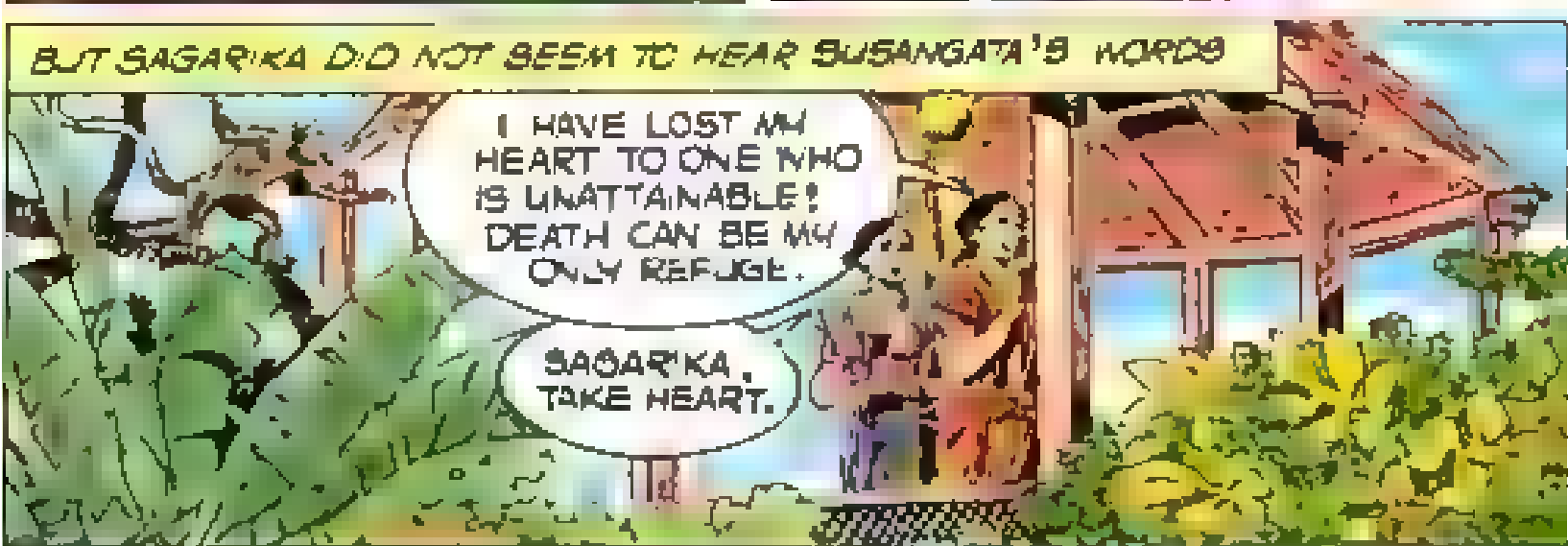


NOW TELL  
ME ALL.

AM OVERCOME BY A  
SENSE OF SHAME YOU  
WASN'T TELL ANYONE  
ABOUT TH S.



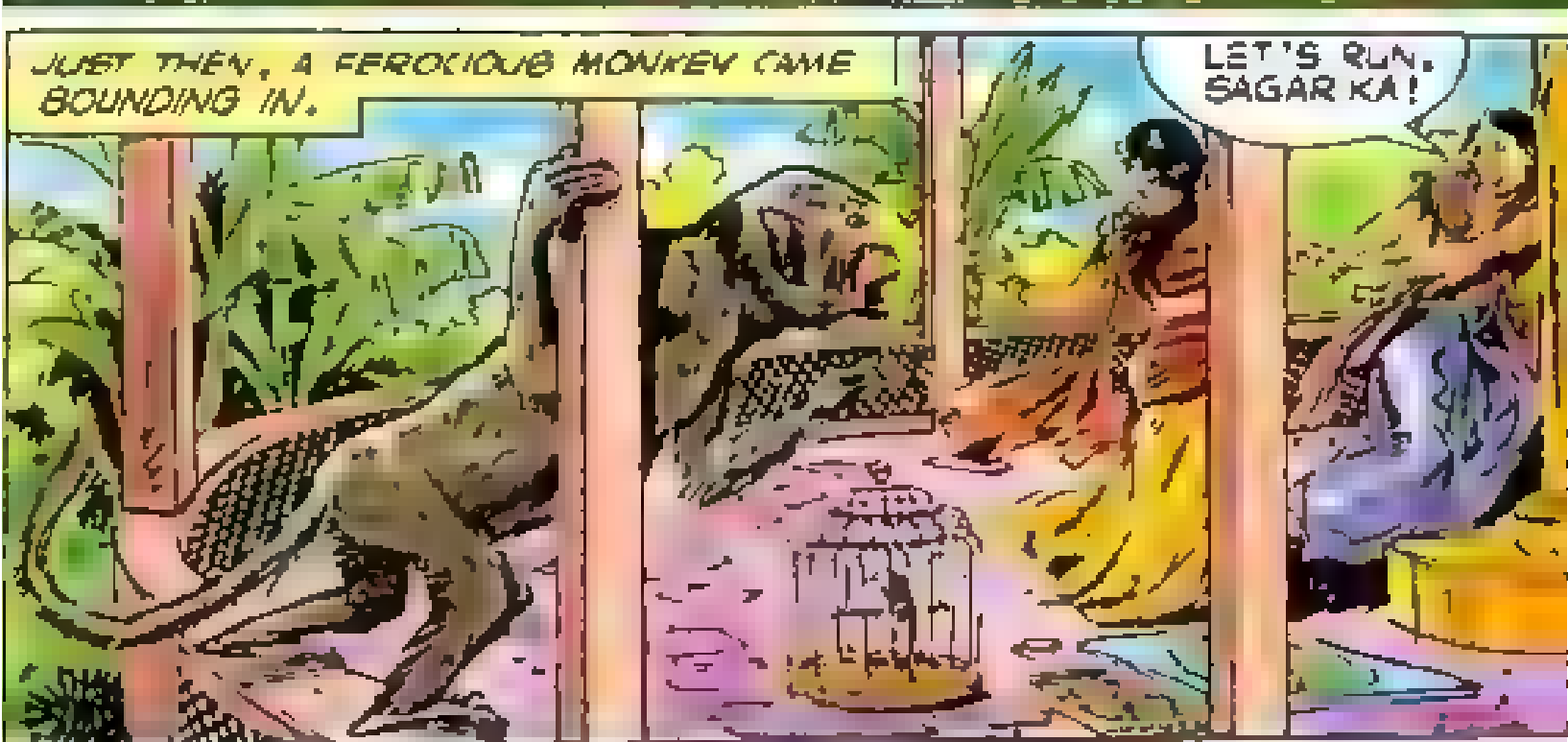
YOUR SECRET IS SAFE  
WITH ME, BUT THIS  
TALKING BIRD MAY  
BLURT OUT  
EVERYTHING...



BUT SAGARIKA DID NOT SEEM TO HEAR SUSANGATA'S WORDS

I HAVE LOST MY  
HEART TO ONE WHO  
IS UNATTAINABLE!  
DEATH CAN BE MY  
ONLY REFUGE.

SAGARIKA,  
TAKE HEART.



JUST THEN, A FEROCIOUS MONKEY CAME  
BOUNDED IN.

LET'S RUN,  
SAGARIKA!



ATTRACTED BY THE FOOD IN THE CAGE, THE MONKEY OPENED IT. THE FRIGHTENED BIRD FLEW OUT.



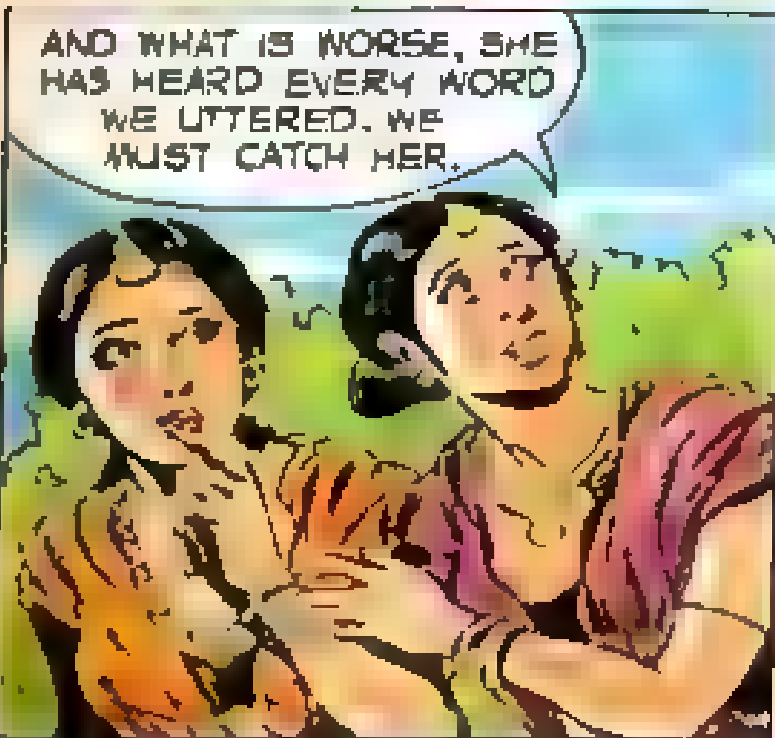
MEANWHILE OUTSIDE —

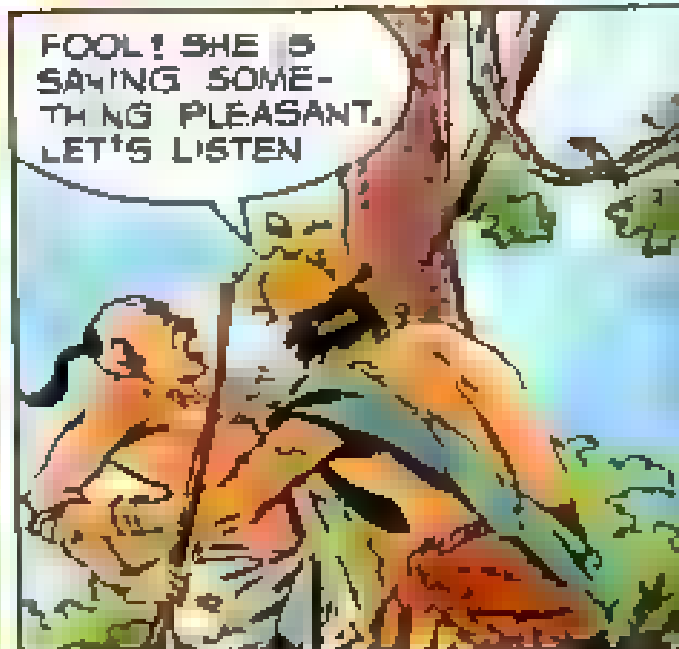
SUSANGATA, SOMEONE MAY SEE THE DRAWING WE SHOULD HAVE RUBBED IT OFF.

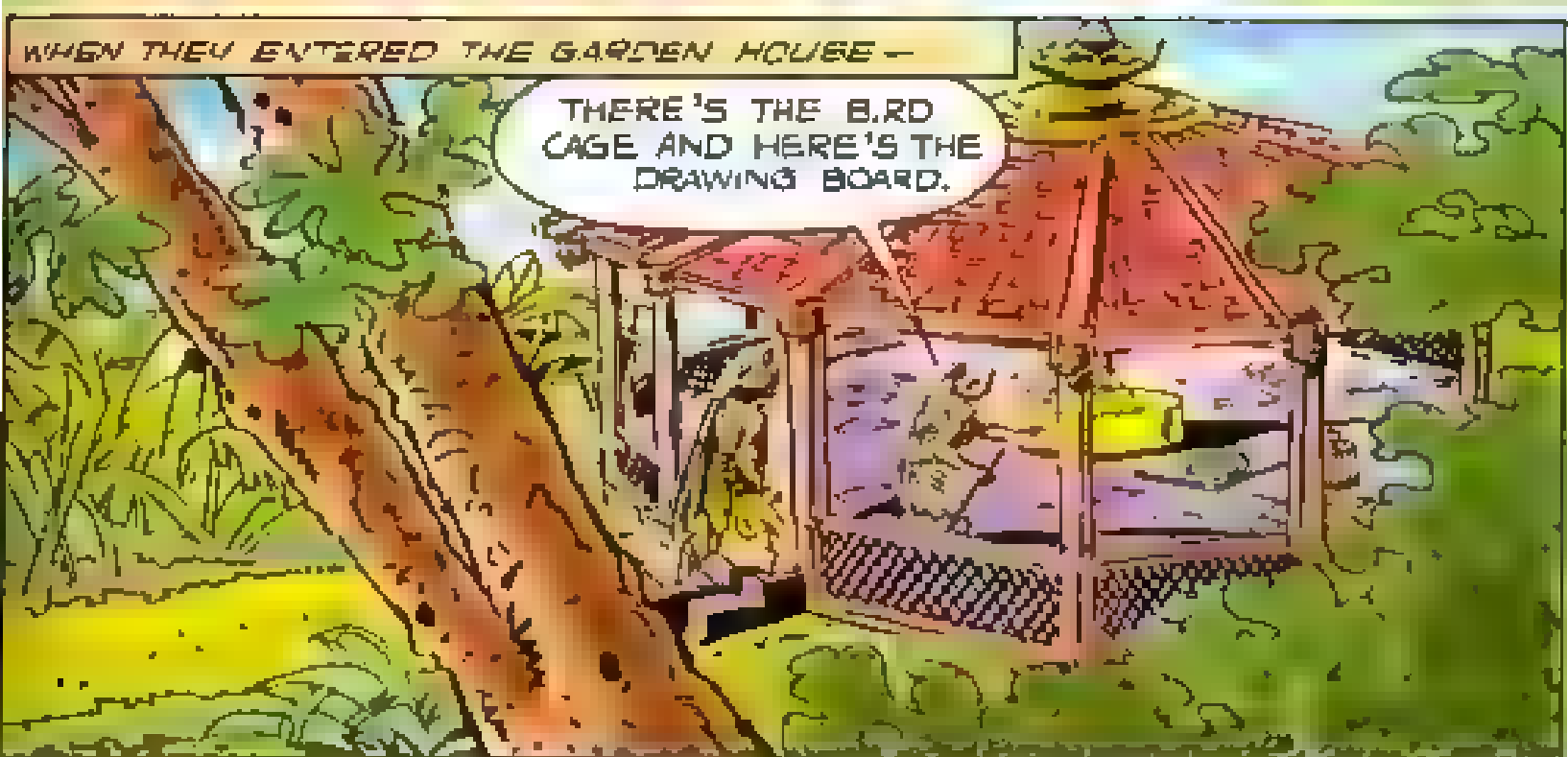
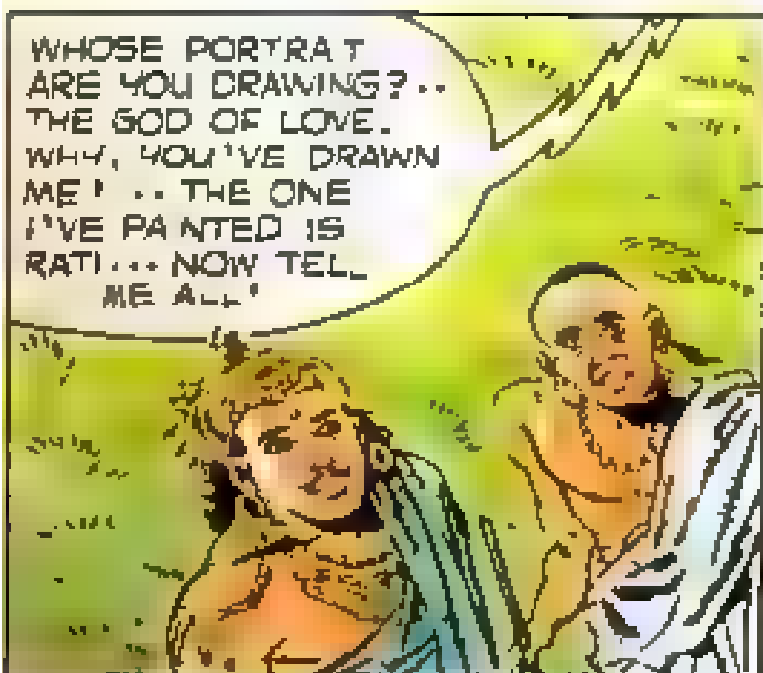
YOU HAVE SOMETHING MORE SERIOUS THAN THAT TO WORRY ABOUT. LOOK! MEDHAVINI HAS FLOWN AWAY.



AND WHAT IS WORSE, SHE HAS HEARD EVERY WORD WE UTTERED. WE MUST CATCH HER.







MEANWHILE SAGARKA AND BUSANGATA NOT FINDING THE BIRD, WERE RETURNING TO THE GARDEN HOUSE FOR THE PAINTING.

THAT IS VASANTAKA SPEAKING. THE KING MUST BE HERE, TOO. LET'S HIDE AND LISTEN TO THEM.

IT IS YOUR PORTRAIT!  
AND THAT OF A MAIDEN TOO!



MEANWHILE UDAYANA HAD TAKEN THE PAINTING



O UDAYANA, YOU SEEM SPELLBOUND! WHY DOES THE PORTRAIT HOLD SUCH FASCINATION FOR YOU?




SAGARIKA HELD HER BREATH

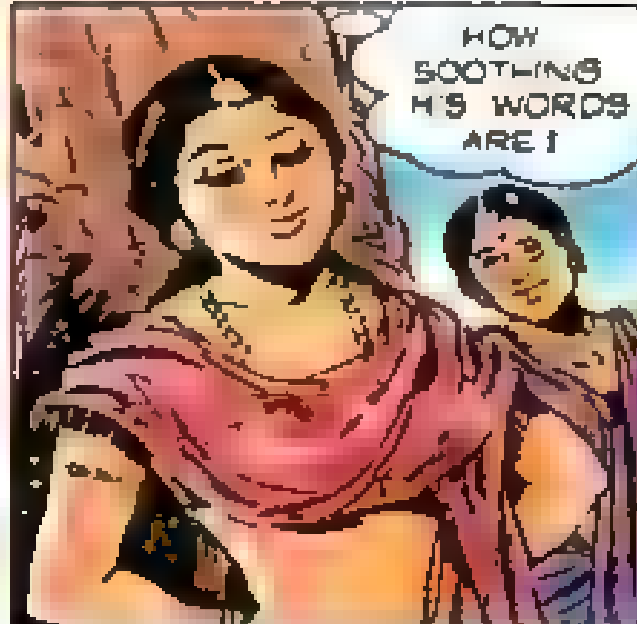
MY LIFE DEPENDS ON HIS ANSWER. WHAT WILL HE SAY?









THIS MAIDEN EXCELS  
LAKSHMI IN GRACE. SHE  
HAS CAPTIVATED MY  
HEART.



HOW  
SOOTHING  
HIS WORDS  
ARE!




I MUST FIND  
A WAY OF  
BRINGING THE  
KING AND MY  
FRIEND  
TOGETHER



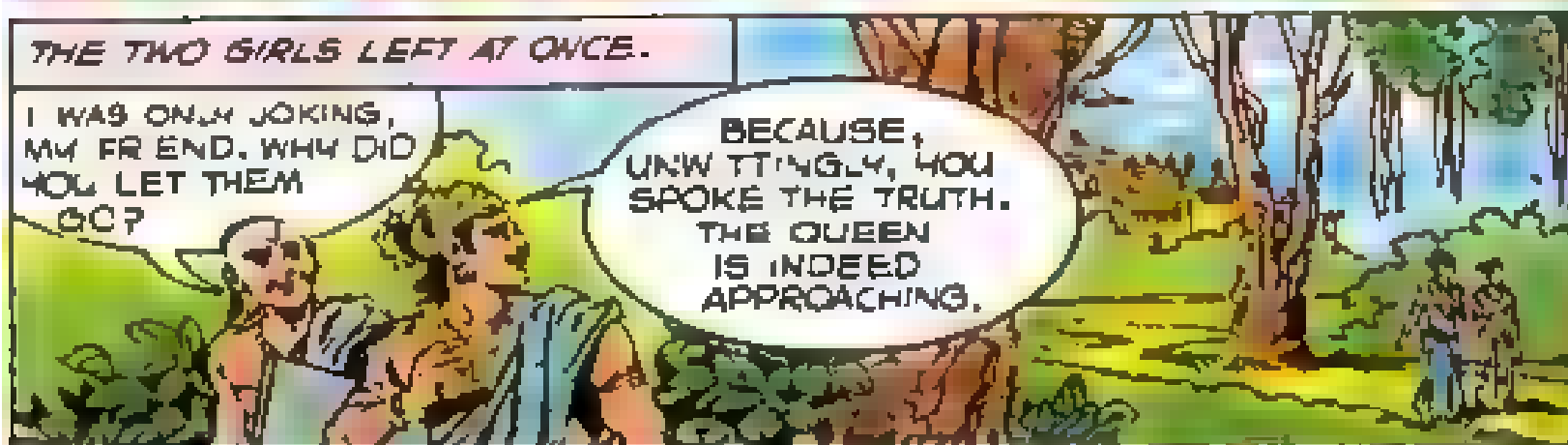
SAGAR KA, WAIT  
HERE. I WILL  
GO AND GET THE  
PORTRAIT.

ALL RIGHT,  
BUT PLEASE COME  
BACK SOON.

SUSANGATA WENT INTO THE GARDEN HOUSE AND CAME OUT AFTER A LITTLE WHILE WITH THE KING AND VASANTAKA.



THE KING IS COOKING  
THIS WAY! I HOPE  
SUSANGATA HASN'T  
TOLD HIM IT WAS  
I WHO DREW HIS  
PORTRAIT.



BUT THE CLUMSY VASANTAKA DROPPED THE PORTRAIT

MY LORD, I CAME THIS WAY TO SEE IF THE NAVAMALUKA CREEPER HAS BLOSSOMED

LET'S GO TOGETHER.



KANCHANA MALA, THE QUEEN'S COMPANION, PICKED UP THE PORTRAIT AND SHOWED IT TO THE QUEEN.

IT'S MY LORD AND SAGARIKA!



MY LORD, WHO HAS DRAWN THIS?



I TOLD THE KING THAT A SELF PORTRAIT IS DIFFICULT TO DO. HE DISAGREED - AND TO PROVE HIS POINT HE DREW HIS OWN PORTRAIT.

AND THE GALT







THE NEXT DAY VASANTAKA  
MET SUSANGATA.

SUSANGATA, MY  
FRIEND PINES FOR  
SAGARIKA. CAN'T  
YOU DO SOMETHING  
ABOUT IT?

THIS EVENING I WILL  
BRING SAGARIKA TO THE  
MAHAVI BOWER, DRESSED  
IN THE QUEEN'S  
ROBES AND MYSELF  
WILL BE IN KANCHANA  
MALA'S DRESS.

LITTLE DO THEY REALISE  
THAT KANCHANA MALA, WHO  
HAPPENED TO BE PASSING  
BY HAD HEARD EVERY WORD.

SHE TOLD THE QUEEN WHAT SHE HAD OVERHEARD—

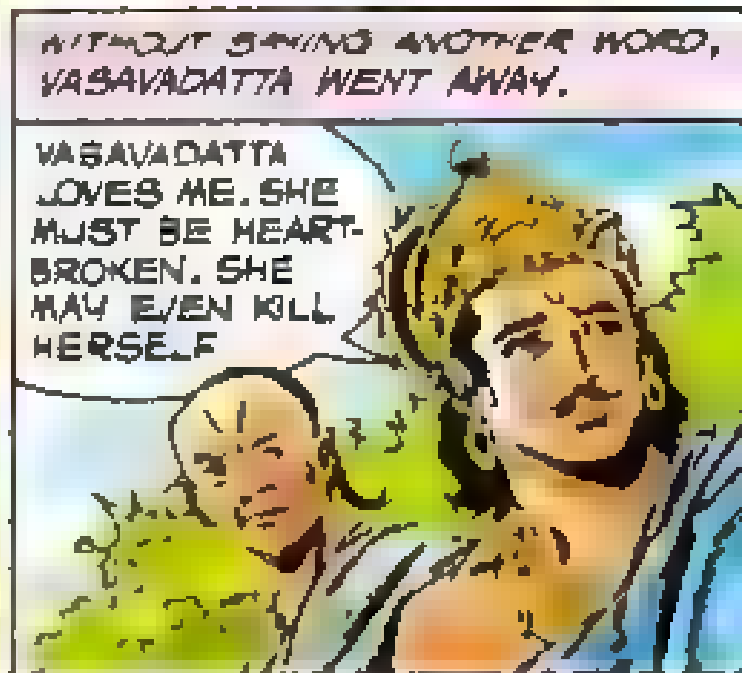
CAN'T  
BELIEVE  
IT!

YOU WILL,  
IF YOU VISIT THE  
MAHAVI BOWER  
THIS EVENING

THAT EVENING AT THE  
MAHAVI BOWER—

SUSANGATA, YOU LOOK  
QUITE CHARMING DRESSED  
IN KANCHANA MALA'S  
CLOTHES AND SAGARIKA  
LOOKS JUST LIKE THE  
QUEEN. COME, THE  
KING IS WAITING

WHEN VASANTAKA LED THEM TO UDAYANA -



MEANWHILE, SAGAR KA APPROACHED THE MAHARAJA'S BOWER TO PICK UP THE QUEEN'S CLOTHES







AND I BROUGHT  
HIM HERE ONLY  
BECAUSE  
THOUGHT IT  
WAS YOU



AND HERE IS THE  
PROOF LOOK AT  
THIS NOOSE!

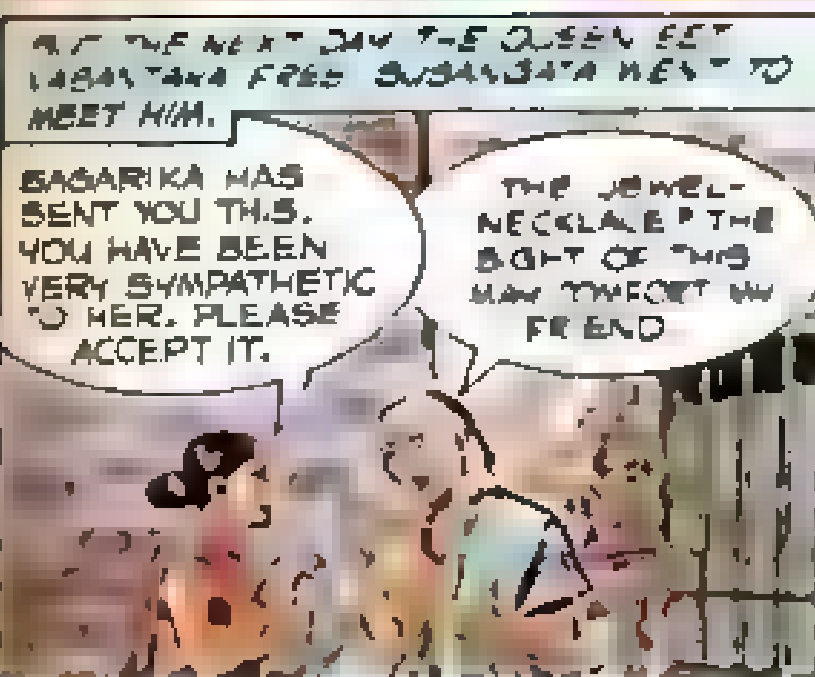
KANCHANA  
MALA, AND  
HIM WITH  
THIS VERY  
NOOSE



AND TAKE AWAY  
SAGARIKA AND LOCK  
HER UP.

HOW UNFORTUNATE  
I AM NOT TO HAVE BEEN  
ABLE TO DIE AS I  
WISHED

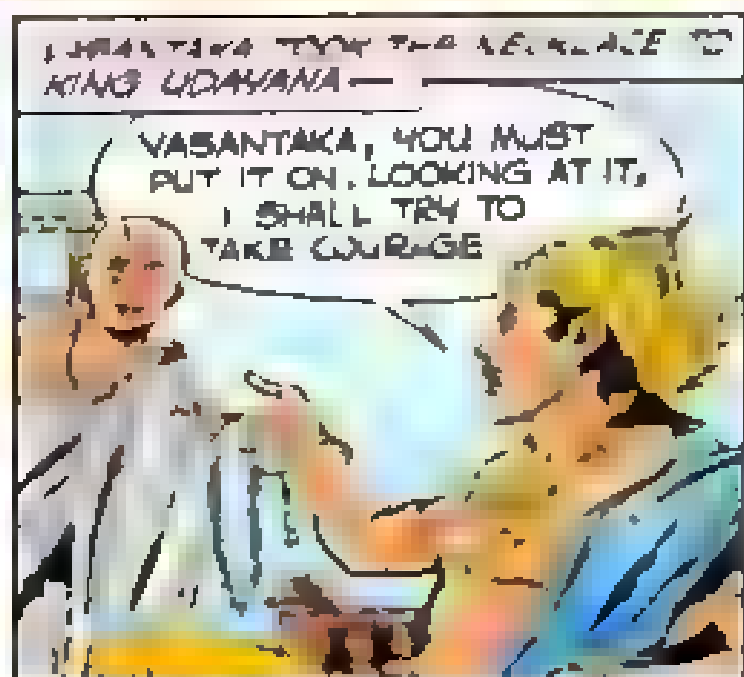
AND KANCHANA MALA LED  
VASANTAKA AND SAGARIKA AWAY AS  
UDAYANA WATCHED HE, PLEASANTLY



AT THE NEXT DAY THE QUEEN SET  
VASANTAKA FREE SUGANDHA WENT TO  
MEET HIM.

SAGARIKA HAS  
SENT YOU THIS.  
YOU HAVE BEEN  
VERY SYMPATHETIC  
TO HER. PLEASE  
ACCEPT IT.

THE JEWEL-  
NECKLACE THE  
GIFT OF THIS  
MY FINEST  
FRIEND



UDAYANA TOOK THE NECKLACE TO  
KING UDAYANA —

VASANTAKA, YOU MUST  
PUT IT ON. LOOKING AT IT,  
I SHALL TRY TO  
TAKE COURAGE

LATER IN THE AFTERNOON, A MAGICIAN FROM UDAYIN CAME TO THE PALACE TO PERFORM BEFORE KING UDAYANA AND QUEEN VASAVADATTA.

HERE YOU SEE BRAHMA, VISHNU AND MAHESHWARA, AND THERE — THE APSARAS DANCING.

YOU FOOL, SHOW SAGAR KA IF YOU WANT TO PLEASE THE KING!



JUST THEN AN ATTENDANT CAME IN

I BEG YOUR PARDON FOR INTERRUPTING, YOUR MAJESTY, BUT VASUBHUTI, THE MINISTER FROM SIMHALA, SEEKS AN AUDIENCE.

MY UNCLE'S MINISTER! HE SHOULD SEE HIM AT ONCE!

BUT, YOUR MAJESTY, YOU HAVEN'T SEEN MY BEST ITEM! PERMIT ME . . .

LATER, NOT NOW.





THEN VASUBHUTI ENTERED AND PAID HIS RESPECTS TO UDAYANA.

I BRING BAD NEWS:  
OUR SHIP HAS SUNK.  
ONLY YOUR ENVOY AND  
I MANAGED TO SURVIVE.  
YOUR BETROTHED,  
PRINCESS RATNAVALI,  
WHOM WE WERE  
BRINGING TO KAUSHAMBI  
WAS DROWNED IN  
THE STORMY SEA.

MY BETROTHED...

MY DEAR  
COUSIN!  
NO!!

JUST THEN—

FIRE! FIRE!  
THERE IS A FIRE IN  
THE INNER  
APARTMENT.

MY LORD! SAVE  
SAGARIKA! HER HANDS  
AND FEET HAVE BEEN  
BOUND ON MY ORDERS.

UDAYANA DASHED INTO THE INNER APARTMENTS.

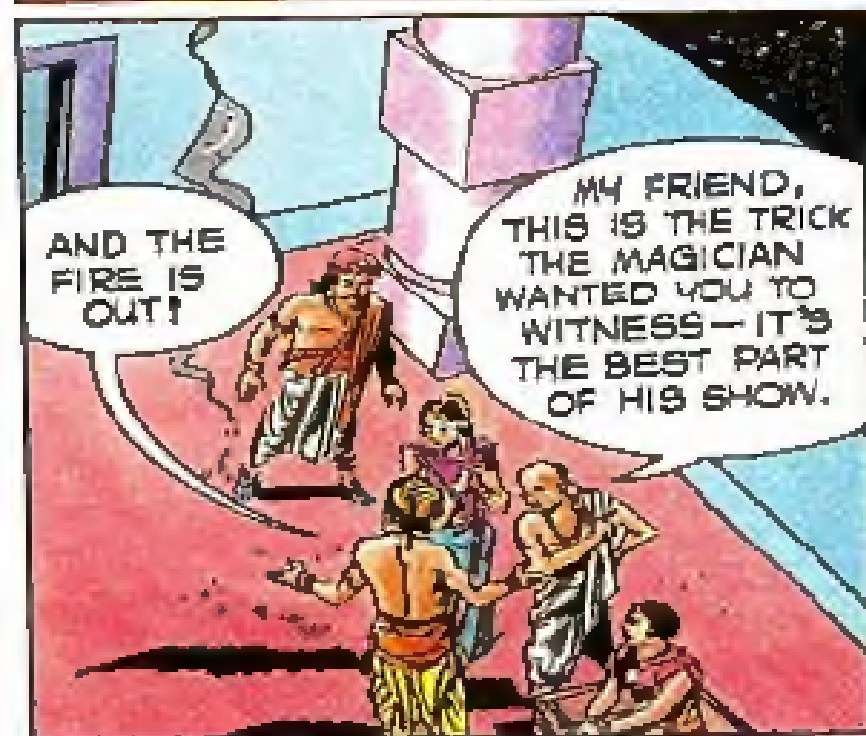
SAGARIKA!

BUT... BUT... WHAT  
KIND OF FIRE IS THIS?  
NOT EVEN MY HAIR  
IS SINGED!



AND THE  
FIRE IS  
OUT!

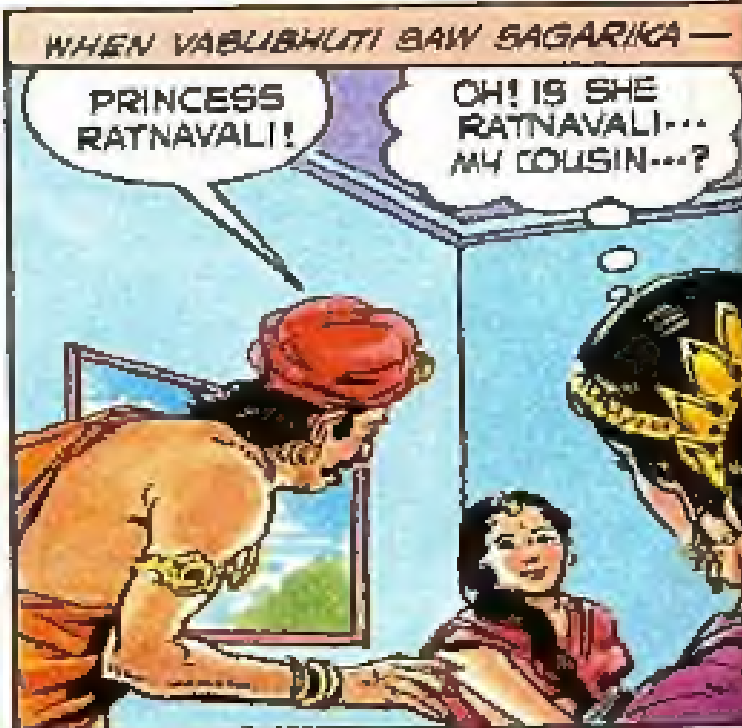
MY FRIEND,  
THIS IS THE TRICK  
THE MAGICIAN  
WANTED YOU TO  
WITNESS — IT'S  
THE BEST PART  
OF HIS SHOW.



WHEN VABUBHUTI SAW SAGARIKA —

PRINCESS  
RATNAVALI!

OH! IS SHE  
RATNAVALI...  
MY COUSIN...?



MY LORD, I AM  
ASHAMED OF MY-  
SELF. FREE  
HER OF THOSE  
BONDS.

I'LL DO  
AS YOU WISH,  
DEAR.



THEN VASUBHUTI EXPLAINED HOW RATNAVALI CAME TO BE BETROTHED TO KING UDAYANA ON THE INITIATIVE TAKEN BY VAUGANDHARAYANA.

MY LORD, I WONDER WHY VAUGANDHARAYANA TOLD US NOTHING.

HE MUST HAVE HAD HIS REASONS. WE'LL SEND FOR HIM.

VAUGANDHARAYANA CAME AT ONCE —

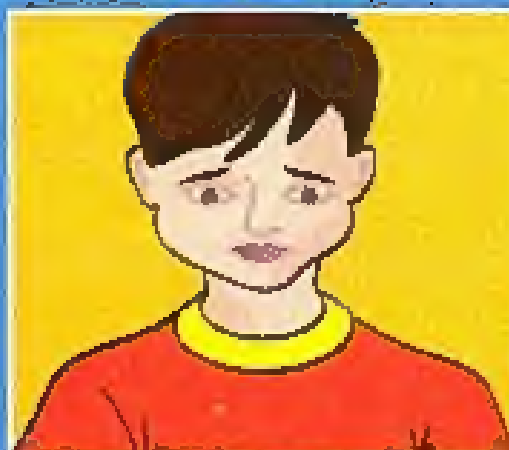
I HEARD A SAGE PROPHECY THAT THE MAN WHO MARRIES RATNAVALI WILL BECOME THE GREATEST OF KINGS...

... AND THAT'S WHY I TRIED TO BRING ABOUT A MARRIAGE BETWEEN YOU, MY LORD, AND THE PRINCESS OF SIMHALA.

THEN VASAVADATTA LED RATNAVALI TO UDAYANA.

MY LORD, ACCEPT MY COUSIN AS YOUR WIFE.

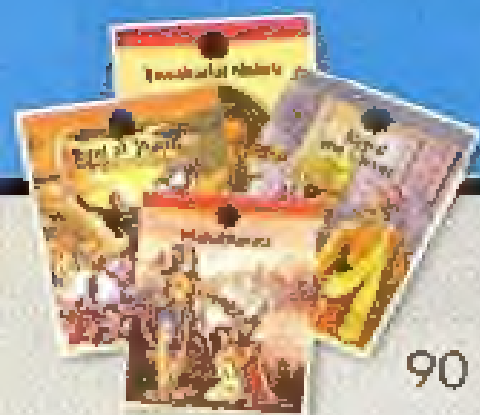




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